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A COMPRESSOR AND A METHOD FOR COMPRESSING FLUID

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A COMPRESSOR AND A METHOD FOR COMPRESSING FLUID

Background

[0001] This invention is directed to a compressor, such as a rotary screw compressor, for compressing a fluid, such as air.

[0002] Screw compressors use two or more intermeshing rotors, each provided with helical lobes to produce compression when the rotors are rotated. A fluid, such as air, is introduced into the compressor and is trapped between the rotors and compressed to the required discharge pressure.

[0003] However, these compressors are expensive to manufacture since they are provided with windows, slots, ports, passages, and the like, which are formed by fairly intricate castings and weldments. Also, when it is desired to change the operating parameters of the compressor, such as its discharge pressure, flow rate, and capacity, the housing has to be replaced with a new cast housing having a different arrangement of windows, slots, ports, passages, and the like, which adds to the expense.

[0004] Therefore, what is needed is a compressor of the above type that eliminates, or at least reduces, these problems.

Description of the Drawings

[0005] Figs. 1 and 3 are sectional views of a screw compressor according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0006] Fig. 2 is a sectional view of a component of the invention.

[0007] Fig. 4 is an exploded isometric view of some components of the compressor of Figs. 1 and 2.

[0008] Fig. 5A, 5B, and 5C are diagrammatic views depicting three operation modes of the compressor of Figs. 1 and 3.

Detailed Description

[0009] Referring to Fig. 1 of the drawing, a screw compressor according to an embodiment of the invention is referred to, in general, by the reference numeral 10. The compressor 10 includes a housing 12, preferably formed of a forged billet and having a series of openings, bores, and chambers formed therein as will be described. A drive shaft 14 is supported in a longitudinal through bore 12a formed in the housing by a pair of axially spaced bearing assemblies 16 and 18 which are supported in the housing by two carriers 20 and 22, respectively, that are mounted in the bore. It is understood that the shaft 14 is connected to a driver, such as an electric motor, for rotating the shaft.

[0010] A rotor 24 is supported on the shaft 14 for rotation therewith, extends in the above bore 12a, and will be described in detail later. A cylindrical liner 26 is affixed to the inner surface of the housing 12 defining the bore 12a, and is very slightly spaced from the outer surface of the rotor 24. The rotor 24 and the liner 26 will be described in detail later.

[0011] A cover 28 is bolted over one end of the housing 12 and has a through opening in alignment with an opening formed in the carrier 22 to define an inlet 30 for a fluid, such as air, to be compressed. A passage 22a is formed in the carrier 22 that connects the inlet 30 to the bore 12a. A cover 32 extends over the other end of the housing 12 and has a through opening that receives a portion of the bearing 16. A radially extending discharge passage 34 is formed through the housing 12 for discharging the compressed fluid to external equipment.

[0012] A seal 36 extends adjacent the bearing 16 and around the shaft 14 to seal against the egress of the fluid from the bore 12a. One end of a drain passage 38 extends from the bore 12a near the seal 36, through the carrier 20, and is vented to a

collection point. A radially extending drain connection 42 also extends from the bore 12a through the housing 12.

[0013] The liner 26 is shown in detail in Fig. 2 and includes an elongated, variable-width, slot 26a extending through a wall portion of the liner, along with a discharge port 26b in a slightly spaced relation to the slot. Although only one slot 26a and discharge port 26b are shown, it is understood that another slot 26a and discharge port 26b are formed through the liner 26 in a diametrically opposed relation to the slot 26a and discharge port 26b shown in Fig. 2. It is also understood that the discharge ports 26b are connected by internal passages (not shown) in the housing 12 to the discharge passage 34. The liner 26 is interchangeable, e.g., it can be replaced by a different liner, it can be used to replace a different liner, or it can be added to a compressor that was initially designed without a liner.

[0014] Referring to Fig. 3, a gate rotor assembly 50 is located in a chamber formed in the housing 12 to one side of the shaft 14 and the main rotor 24, with the axis of the assembly extending transverse to the axis of the rotor. The assembly 50 includes a cylindrical support 54 having an annular flange 54a extending therefrom. A shaft 56 extends through the support 54 and the lower end portion of the shaft 56, as viewed in Fig. 3, projects from the corresponding lower end of the support 54, through a thrust bearing 58 and a thrust washer 60, and into a cover 62 bolted to the housing 12. The other end portion of the shaft 56 projects from the upper end of the support 54 and extends into a cover 64 affixed to the housing 12, to permit rotation of the assembly 50 in the housing 12.

[0015] An annular gate rotor 66 is affixed to the upper surface of the flange 54a, and extends, with the flange, through one of the slots 26a formed through the liner 26, so as to mesh with the main rotor 24. Rotation of the main rotor 24 thus causes corresponding rotation of the gate rotor 66 for reasons to be described.

[0016] Another gate rotor assembly 70 is provided on the opposite side of the main rotor 24, is inverted when compared to the gate rotor assembly 50, and includes a rotor 72 which extends through the other slot 26a of the liner 26 and also meshes with the

main rotor 24. Since the gate rotor 70 is identical to the gate rotor assembly 50, it will not be described in detail.

[0017] As shown in Fig. 4 the main rotor 24 has a plurality of lobes 24a which engage corresponding lobes 66a and 72a formed on the gate rotors 66 and 72, respectively, so that rotation of the rotor 24 causes a successive intermeshing with the lobes 24a and the lobes 66a and 72a and thus compresses fluid introduced between the lobes, in a manner to be described.

[0018] Figs. 5A, 5B, and 5C depict the above compression in various stages of operation. In particular, the shaft 14, and therefore the rotor 24, is rotated, which causes corresponding rotation of the gate rotors 66 and 72. Fluid, such as air, enters the compressor 10 via the inlet 30 (Fig. 1) and passes through the passage 22a, into the bore 12a and through the slots 26a (Figs. 1 and 2) in the liner 26. The fluid then fills the screw grooves defined by the lobes 24a of the main rotor 24, as shown in Fig. 5A. As the rotors 24, 66, and 72 rotate further, lobes 66a and 72a of the gate rotors 66 and 72, respectively, enter the latter screw grooves, trapping the air, and actual air compression begins, as shown in Fig. 5B. As the rotation continues, the trapped air is compressed as the length and the volume of each groove is reduced. When the main rotor 24 rotates far enough, each groove passes the discharge ports 26b (Fig. 2) of the liner 26, thus delivering the compressed air to the discharge passage 34, via the above-mentioned internal passages in the housing 12, for delivery to external equipment, such as a discharge manifold, or the like.

[0019] Also, since the shape and/or location of the slots 26a and the discharge ports 26b of the liner 26 dictate the operating parameters of the compressor, including its discharge pressure, flow rate, and capacity, these parameters can be changed by simply replacing the liner 26 with another liner having slots and/or discharge ports of a different shape and/or location. Thus, a compressor system could consist of the compressor 10, and two or more liners similar to the liner 26, with the location and size of the slots and/or discharge ports of each liner being designed for a particular different application of the system. Also, an existing compressor that does not have a liner can

be fitted with a liner similar to the liner 26 with the slots and discharge ports being designed for the specific desired operating parameters.

[0020] As a result, there is provided a simple, easy, and cost-effective technique of varying the operating parameters of the compressor without having to resort to providing a relatively expensive new housing having formed windows, slots, ports, and passages formed therein to achieve the operating parameters. Even if only one liner is used, it also can be appreciated that the liner reduces the number and depth of the passages and ports that must be formed in the housing to achieve the desired flow characteristics.

[0021] Although not shown in the drawings, it is understood that the compressor 10 can be provided with a water injection system that supplies a continuous flow of cool filtered water to the compressor. This water is injected into the air stream as the air passes through the compressor 10 and is compressed in the above-described manner. The water mixes with the air and the mixture discharges from the compressor 10, via the discharge passage 34, to a separator (not shown) where the water is removed and collected. The pressure of the compressed air in the separator provides the force to circulate the water through the water injection system and inject it into the compressor 10.

[0022] It is understood that variations may be made in the foregoing without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, the invention is not limited to a screw compressor, but is equally applicable to any type of rotary machine having two intermeshing rotors. Also, any number of gate, or secondary, rotors that engage the main rotor can be utilized. Also spatial references, such as "upward", "downward", "vertical", etc., are for the purpose of illustration only and also do not limit the specific orientation or location of the structure described above.

[0023] Although only a few exemplary embodiments of this invention have been described in detail above, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many other modifications are possible in these embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as defined in the following

claims. In the claims, means-plus-function clauses are intended to cover the structures described herein as performing the recited function and not only structural equivalents, but also equivalent structures.